



## Disorder is about more than food

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Do you or a family member have a good or bad day depending upon the number on the scale?

Do you or a family member decide when to quit eating by what others leave on their plate rather than whether you are full or not?

Have you or a family member not engaged in an activity due to being too “fat” to wear clothes needed to engage in the activity?

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, an eating disorder may be present.

Eating disorders involve extreme emotions, attitudes, and behaviors surrounding weight and food.

They are serious emotional and physical problems that can have life-threatening consequences for females and males.

- Close to 10 million females and 1 million males in the U.S. are battling eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia, while millions more suffer from binge eating disorder.
- Ten percent of all eating disorders occur in males.
- The onset of eating disorders most commonly occurs during puberty and the late teen/early adult years, but symptoms can occur as young as kindergarten.

According to the National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA), over one-half of teenage girls and nearly one-third of teenage boys use unhealthy weight control behaviors such as skipping meals, fasting, smoking cigarettes, purging, and taking laxatives.

Eating disorders typically are of three types: anorexia nervosa, bulimia

nervosa, and binge eating disorder.

- **Anorexia Nervosa** is characterized by self-starvation and excessive weight loss.
- **Bulimia Nervosa** is characterized by a secretive cycle of binge eating followed by purging. Bulimia includes eating large amounts of food in short periods of time, then getting rid of the food and calories through vomiting, laxative abuse, or over-exercising.
- **Binge Eating Disorder (also known as Compulsive Overeating)** is characterized primarily by periods of uncontrolled, impulsive, or continuous eating beyond the point of feeling comfortably full.

While there is no purging, there may be repetitive diets and feelings of shame or self-hatred after a binge.

Eating disorders are complex conditions that arise from a combination of long-standing behavioral, emotional, psychological, interpersonal, and social factors.

While eating disorders may begin with a preoccupation with food and weight, they are most often about much more than food.

For an individual with an eating disorder, food is often the means to an end in an effort to attain some sense of control when the rest of their life seems chaotic.

In individuals with eating disorders, the use of food or the control of food comes to serve as a way to deal with the conflicts, pressures, and stresses of life or to manage feelings and emotions that are

otherwise overwhelming.

Although dieting, bingeing, and purging may begin as a way to cope with painful emotions and to feel in control of one’s life, these behaviors ultimately damage a person’s physical and emotional health.

For parents, do not think you are a “bad parent” if your child’s friend or school personnel contact you about the possibility of your child having an eating disorder as individuals with eating disorders are good at hiding their condition.

In next week’s article, we will share with you warning signs to look for if you think someone may have an eating disorder and tips on how to prevent eating disorders.

For more information on symptoms, physical complications, and treatment, as well as additional information on what to do if you suspect someone has an eating disorder, visit the following web sites:

- [www.AEDweb.org](http://www.AEDweb.org) - The Academy for Eating Disorders
- [www.edap.org](http://www.edap.org) - Eating Disorders Awareness and Prevention
- [www.somethingfishy.org](http://www.somethingfishy.org) - General Information and Personal Experiences
- [www.edreferral.com](http://www.edreferral.com) - Eating Disorders Referral Site
- [www.NationalEatingDisorders.org](http://www.NationalEatingDisorders.org)

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